

**HOMILY by**

**Most Rev. Dr. Salvatore Pennacchio, Apostolic Nuncio to India**

**During the Solemn Proclamation of St. Andrew's Basilica at Arthunkal,**

**Diocese of Alleppey on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2010**

Your Lordship, Most Rev. Stephen Athipozhivil

Rev. Fathers and Sisters,

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am very happy to be with all of you today for the solemn Proclamation of St. Andrew's Forane Church to the status of Minor Basilica. It is a special title given by the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, to this important Church dedicated to St. Andrew. I am very grateful to my dear brother, Bishop Stephen, for the kind invitation to preside over this celebration and for the cordial welcome I received at my arrival at Alleppey.

I talking about St. Andrew, Pope Benedict XVI said that it was "Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, who brought him to Jesus, straightaway showing an unusual apostolic spirit". (Benedict XVI, The Apostles, p.80).

The three readings of today's Mass help us to understand the importance of the temple – the place where God is worshipped – and the importance of beings apostles of Christ.

In the **first reading** we hear of how life giving waters flow from the temple flowing down to the stillness of the sea but giving life to all along the way. The temple therefore is life giving because it is alive. It is not an inanimate building but a living organism.

This is explained to us in the **second reading**, the letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians. In those days there were no churches, no places of public worship for Christians. The Christian people met in private homes. In the absence of a Christian temple, Paul reminded the community in Corinth that they themselves were the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in them as a community. He said that “you are the temple of God, God’s Spirit dwells in you and the foundation, the only foundation of this temple is Christ Himself.”

St. Paul was able to say these words only because of what we heard Jesus proclaim in the Gospel of today. The **Gospel** tells about the zeal Jesus had for His Father’s house, a zeal that brought Him to drive out the merchants that had overtaken what was meant to be a house of prayer and praise and turned it into a marketplace. But the zeal of Jesus in preserving the dignity of the temple went far beyond the walls of the temple of Jerusalem, to the temple of his own body – the Church – the community of the baptized who believe in him. They are the living stones of God’s temple.

Today we celebrate the raising of this church, this temple, into a minor basilica. St. Andrew’s Forane Church is indeed a beautiful building but more important, we have a beautiful temple – you, the temple of God here in Alleppey, who like St. Andrew are called to be life giving apostles of Christ.

You are the temple of God and the Spirit of God lives in you as a community. It is this Spirit that gives you the courage to call God, Father. It is this spirit that helps you lift your voices in praise. It is this Spirit that makes you aware of the needs of others and do what you can to help them in their needs. It is this Spirit that helps you realize that this building is important because you are its living stones.

As the life giving water flowing out of the temple to the sea, we see ourselves as temples of the living God leaving this place as did the water of Ezekiel’s temple, to be sources of life, love, justice and healing which we bring from here to our homes, our places of work, to everyone, our loved ones and yes.

As we continue to celebrate this Mass let us pray that we may always remember our own worth and dignity as temples of the living God both as individuals and as a community, that we may bring the living waters of this temple, St. Andrew's Minor Basilica to the entire Diocese of Alleppey and beyond.

Let us invoke the help of Our Lady to be always "living stones" in building "a spirituality of communion" and be faithful instruments, apostles of Christ, in bringing, through our lives, the testimony of the Gospel of peace, unity and love.

---

### **HOMILY by**

**Most Rev. Dr. Salvatore Pennacchio, Apostolic Nuncio to India**

**During the Solemn Pontifical Eucharistic Celebration at Mount Carmel Cathedral**

**Diocese of Alleppey on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2010**

Your Lordship, Most Rev. Stephen Athipozhiyil

Rev. Fathers and Sisters,

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In the gospel today, Jesus explains to us what makes for true purity before God.

**Who is pure before God? In the minds of the Pharisees, the person who is pure is he who observes all the external ritual regulations to the last detail regardless of whether he is sinner or not. But for Jesus, the person who is pure is someone whose conscience is clear and whose actions are blameless.**

**When Jesus refused to wash his hands in the Pharisees' house, he intended to stress this truth. He wanted them to understand that giving great importance to external rituals is a total misunderstanding of religion and of**

**God. Jesus opposes the external observances of the Pharisees and presents to them the religion of the heart.**

**In the Bible, the heart represents the deepest core of a person. It is the real source of someone's relationship with God. Jesus reminds the Pharisees then and continues to remind us now, that what soils a person is not dirt or dust from without, but greed and wickedness that comes from within.**

**As I bid your Lordship and all of you here present goodbye, may I leave you with the message of today's Mass. May we look beyond the external actions of our ritual to see the spirit within our worship that comes from our hearts and extends to our actions of justice and love for others.**

**To Your Lordship, and all the people of Alleppey, thank you very much for the unforgettable days I spent with you.**

---